

HURRICANE MITCH RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE



USAID/Nicaragua Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Program

<i>(U.S. Millions of Dollars)</i>	<i>\$103.6</i>
<i>Public Health</i>	<i>30.6</i>
<i>Economic Reactivation</i>	<i>53.5</i>
<i>Disaster Mitigation</i>	<i>6.6</i>
<i>Education</i>	<i>4.5</i>
<i>Municipal Infrastructure</i>	<i>2.9</i>
<i>Transparency and Accountability</i>	<i>1.0</i>
<i>Food Aid</i>	<i>4.5</i>



Departments of Nicaragua
Affected by Hurricane Mitch

USAID-FUNDED NGO NETWORK IMPROVING HEALTH

San Rafael del Norte, Nicaragua—The group of high school students in this northern rural town began tittering and exchanging embarrassed glances when the father in the video they were watching showed his son how to use a condom to make him aware of the danger of HIV/AIDS.

The approximately 100 students watching the video are participating in an adolescent club set up through NicaSalud, a coalition of non-governmental organizations working in the health field. USAID provided \$6.1 million to NicaSalud to implement 21 health projects. Working in three zones that were particularly hard hit by Hurricane Mitch, NicaSalud's activities include child survival and sexual and reproductive health programs.

As part of its sexual and reproductive health activities, NicaSalud has set up 208 adolescent clubs to promote self-esteem, gender awareness, and



Teenagers in San Rafael del Norte, members of an adolescent club, watch videos on topics such as AIDS, teenage pregnancy and parent-adolescent relationships.

healthy behaviors. While the Hurricane Mitch program does not include family planning activities, the clubs provide teenagers an opportunity to learn about and discuss sexual health matters. The video on teenage pregnancy and AIDS may have been made in Mexico, but the issues it addresses are equally relevant to adolescents in Nicaragua where the teenage pregnancy rate is 27 percent, the highest in Latin America. By the age of 19, half of all Nicaraguan women have had at least one pregnancy. Also, among the entire population, sexually transmitted diseases have risen by nearly 80% in the past 10 years and HIV/AIDS is increasing among Nicaraguans.

After the video, a trained facilitator from Project Concern International (PCI), an international organization participating in the NicaSalud coalition, leads an open discussion giving students a chance to share their feelings and concerns.



Teenagers in the department of Esteli perform a skit warning their peers to avoid teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse.

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NGO NETWORK IMPROVING HEALTH...

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"I'm already familiar with the subject, but it's important to learn more about it," said Carmen Montenegro, a 17-year-old high school student.

Several NicaSalud partners are using specially equipped "cinemobiles" that travel to rural communities to show the videos.

In the remote Bosawas region in northeastern Nicaragua, a "cineboat", outfitted with video equipment, reaches remote communities to show the films. So far, NicaSalud has organized 1,140 "cinemobile" presentations.

The adolescent clubs also develop and perform theatrical sketches for their peers at school and for community groups, addressing teenage pregnancy, AIDS, alcohol and drug problems and crime. At community festivals, organized by several NicaSalud partners and the Ministry of Health, the teenagers have the opportunity to perform their skits or present puppet shows.

In a dusty, backwater village in the department of Estelí a group of teenagers perform a skit on teenage pregnancy, alcohol abuse and crime for members of the community. The adolescent club in this community was set up by CARE, another organization working in the USAID/NicaSalud coalition. CARE received \$400,000 from USAID to implement child survival, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health activities in the department of Estelí.

As part of its child survival and nutrition component, CARE is giving assistance in developing community vegetable plots. A group of eight women in one Estelí community have planted carrots, squash and beets on an acre of land that will provide fresh vegetables for their families and increased income from the sales of the produce.



Members of a mothers club in Jinotega watch a video encouraging breast feeding.

Other child survival activities include home visits to expectant mothers, training for health volunteers, establishing "base houses", which serve as the first link in the chain of community health services, and

setting up mothers clubs.

In the city of Jinotega, Partners of the Americas, working in the NicaSalud network, has 27 base houses set up in the homes of volunteers trained to monitor vaccination records and administer oral rehydration solution.

The mothers club in the German Pomares neighborhood of Jinotega holds monthly meetings to talk about prenatal, infant and child care, and nutrition. At a recent meeting, a group of mothers, jostling their plump, healthy babies on their laps, watched a video on the benefits of breast feeding. All the mothers at the meeting said they are breast feeding their babies.

"Breast only, no bottles," said Maribel del Carmen Oliva, "that's what we have learned here." The 21-year-old mother said she has only breast fed her daughter, Michel Paola, and that the chubby 4-month-old infant has never been sick with anything more than a little cold—a good sign that the USAID/NicaSalud program is working.



Base houses, managed by a selected neighborhood resident, are the first link in the chain of community health services.

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